

VZCZCXYZ0010
RR RUEHWEB

DE RUEHIN #1711/01 3451154
ZNR UUUUU ZZH
R 101154Z DEC 08
FM AIT TAIPEI
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC 0534
INFO RUEHBJ/AMEMBASSY BEIJING 8789
RUEHHK/AMCONSUL HONG KONG 0247

UNCLAS AIT TAIPEI 001711

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DEPARTMENT FOR INR/R/MR, EAP/TC, EAP/PA, EAP/PD - NIDA EMMONS
DEPARTMENT PASS AIT/WASHINGTON

E.O. 12958: N/A
TAGS: [OPRC](#) [KMDR](#) [KPAO](#) [TW](#)
SUBJECT: MEDIA REACTION: INCOMING OBAMA ADMINISTRATION

Summary: Taiwan's major Chinese-language dailies focused December 10 news coverage on the sagging economic situation in Taiwan, on the probe into the former First Family's alleged money-laundering case, and on the controversy over the possible U.S. citizenship of a ruling KMT legislator. In terms of editorials and commentaries, a column in the mass-circulation "Apple Daily" discussed the incoming administration of U.S. President-elect Barack Obama. The article said that, even though Obama harped on "change" during his campaigning, this does not indicate that he will really reverse the U.S. policy in the wake of the election. An editorial in the conservative, pro-unification, English-language "China Post" said Obama's victory points to a future "where people are free to define themselves as they like, but where no one is arbitrarily defined." An editorial in the pro-independence, English-language "Taiwan News" urged the KMT government not to "narrow the future scope of relations with Washington to simply avoiding irritating Beijing but should uphold the principle of 'responsible sovereignty' to engage in multilateral cooperation with the incoming Obama administration." End summary.

A) "When the President Says There Will Be Change, It Does Not Necessarily Means There Will Be Change"

Apple Daily Publisher James Tu wrote in his weekly column in the mass-circulation "Apple Daily" [circulation: 520,000] (12/10):

"... Before he was elected, [U.S. President-elect] Barack Obama's foreign policy and economic and financial policy were widely criticized by conservatives in the United States. But the fact that Obama quickly announced his financial and economic team appointees at the moment when the economic situation was rapidly deteriorating has won him extensive favorable comments. The mounting Dow Jones index in the wake indicated the market's recognition of Obama's financial and economic team. ...

"The situation was more or less the same when it comes to the aspect of national security. Obama's national security team members are all realists. ... Secretary of State-designate Hillary Clinton is a right-wing Democrat who supports humanitarian intervention in areas such as the Balkans and Africa. It is no wonder that even the neo-conservatives believe that a national security team nominated by [Republican] John McCain will not do [better] than [Obama's]. ... Even though Obama campaigned under the banner of change, it does not mean that he will really reverse U.S. policy in the wake of the election. A leader faces only limited choices under harsh conditions, and Obama is no exception. A look at Obama's personally appointed governing team shows that it appears superfluous to have excessive expectations or fear of the 'change' advocated by Obama."

B) "Obama Is America's First Hybrid President"

The conservative, pro-unification, English-language "China Post" [circulation: 30,000] editorialized (12/10):

"... As the U.S. President-elect himself mentioned in his first press conference after winning the November 4th election, Obama is

'a mutt.' His father was an African from Kenya, while his mother hailed from the decidedly white U.S. state of Kansas. Obama is not 'black' in the traditional American understanding of the term. Unlike most African-Americans, Obama is not the descendant of African slaves brought to work in the New World hundreds of years ago. In his best-selling book 'Dreams from My Father,' Obama candidly discusses the reality of his ethnic heritage, and in the end he writes that he made a choice to assume the identity of a black man. But perhaps the reason America's president-in-waiting made such a choice was that no other one was available. ...

"Nationalism, or what some call 'tribalism,' can have positive attributes, such as in sports, but all too often it's a force for evil. America's election of a half-white, half-black, Hawaiian-born, partially Indonesian-educated man with the middle name of 'Hussein' points to the future. It's a future where people are free to define themselves as they like, but where no one is arbitrarily defined. At the close of the year 2008, Barack Obama's heritage is still considered a rarity. But the future is coming, and just, as with automobiles, it's going to feature hybrids. It's time to let go of the rigidity of the past."

C) "Taiwan Needs Agenda for U.S. in Obama Era"

The pro-independence, English-language "Taiwan News" [circulation: 20,000] editorialized (12/10):

"The policy priorities of the incoming Democratic Party administration of president-elect Barack Obama have surfaced in the wake of his appointment of a new national security and foreign policy team last week which will join his economic team in preparing to tackle the international financial tsunami and other global crises. At this juncture, it is essential for the Taiwan government

of President Ma Ying-jeou's restored Chinese Nationalist Party (Kuomintang) administration to seriously examine the future foreign policy goals and values of the incoming United States administration and develop constructive ways to deepen US-Taiwan relations. ... Unlike his predecessor who highlighted the unilateralist pursuit of narrowly conceived American interests, the Obama team has placed top priority on dealing with global issues such as nuclear proliferation, climate change, terrorism, energy, infectious diseases, poverty and international financial instability.

In terms of garnering support from its allies and rising powers to negotiate with its adversaries, there seems little doubt that Obama administration will incorporate multilateral mechanisms to work closely with the People's Republic of China as well as Washington's trans-Atlantic and Asian partners to solve emergent crises and deter potential threats from Russia, Pakistan, the Middle East and Africa in line with strong public anticipation from the American citizenry for the new U.S. government to 'share the burdens' with the world community. ... At this critical juncture, it is ironic that while the KMT intensely pressured the former DPP government of ex-president Chen Shui-bian to cooperate with Bush's priorities and not 'provoke' Beijing, the Ma administration seems to be adopting a minimalist and one-sided approach to Washington. ...

"However, the KMT government may not realize that its disinclination to defend Taiwan's sovereignty simply for the sake of pursuing a cross-strait rapprochement is not likely to endure as a constructive method to forge a long-lasting U.S.-Taiwan relationship since U.S. interests would not be served by Taiwan's transformation into a virtual PRC colony. Instead, Taipei should seriously take into account the major agendas and new values of the Obama administration and implement an active and positive policies to assist the new government of our closest ally to promote its global agenda. ... The KMT government must not narrow the future scope of relations with Washington to simply avoiding irritating Beijing but should uphold the principle of 'responsible sovereignty' to engage in multilateral cooperation with the incoming Obama administration."

YOUNG